

Support for Social Security cuts across party lines. It cuts across racial lines. It cuts across geographic lines. Americans not only want to protect Social Security and Medicare—that goes without saying, although many of my colleagues want to undermine it—but they want to make these programs stronger.

But that is what Republicans—I don't want to make this into a partisan issue, but it has been, unfortunately. It is not what the Republicans in Congress want to do.

I want every American to understand that Republicans in Congress are planning to hold your Social Security hostage. They have done it several different ways over the years. So let's talk about it today.

They have threatened not to raise the debt limit. Raising the debt limit sounds complicated and sounds expensive. It is not. Raising the debt limit, said another way, is about paying our bills, paying the bills our Nation owes and keeping our word. We did this three times under Donald Trump with no drama. Their refusal to pay our bills undermines U.S. global leadership.

For seniors, it would be a disaster. It means that Social Security checks would stop going out. It would mean that seniors won't get their Social Security checks if we don't keep our promises and pay our bills. It is the first way this year that Republicans will attack Social Security.

Second, they want to take this country and the American economy to the brink of default and then leverage their fiscal lunacy to cut your Social Security. Ten years ago, 15 years ago, Republicans didn't act this way. It is this new—just going down the hall here, you can see the other place, the place where the other ones work. The people who are the most extreme in that body clearly are trying to bring this country to the brink. They are willing to take the U.S. economy hostage and only agree to pay our bills—bills we have all run up, including a huge part of that with President Trump and the Republican Congress with the big tax cut giveaway to the richest people in this country—they are willing to take the economy hostage and raise the debt limit if Congress cuts Social Security. The only way they are going to pay their bills is if Congress cuts Social Security. That is what they are saying.

Let that sink in. Congressional Republicans intend to use the fact that we need to pay our bills, pay our bills that already have accrued—to pay our bills is their tool for cutting Social Security. You might disguise their policy as a commission. Every time you hear the word “commission” and then they describe the next part of the sentence to reform Social Security, you know what it means. Their plan is to leverage this: We are going to not pay our bills to cut your Social Security.

Finally, there is privatizing Social Security. The details differ. The terms may change, but the goal is the same:

to kill off Social Security by shrinking it and privatizing it and undermining public support.

It doesn't matter if you voted for this Republican or that Republican who sits at these desks or Senator CASEY or Senator WYDEN or Senator KAINE. Overwhelmingly, people who go to the polls and vote support Social Security and don't want Social Security privatized.

What is happening is nothing less than an attempt to go back on the bedrock promise made to America's middle class that Social Security would be there for them.

On August 14, 1935, Franklin Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act. In 1940 or 1941, for a woman in New Hampshire, I think her first check was \$24. I believe she was a retired schoolteacher and got the first Social Security check.

It doesn't matter to them, to Social Security beneficiaries, about all the politics here. But we know that for Social Security checks, people paid into the program their whole entire working lives. Our government should work for people who paid into Social Security, not against them.

When work has dignity, we honor the retirement security people earned. I urge my Republican colleagues in this body—colleagues, I point out, with healthcare and retirement plans; all of us with healthcare and retirement plans paid for by taxpayers—our retirements aren't at risk. Why should it be for Social Security beneficiaries? None of my colleagues over here are saying: Let's privatize the retirement system for Members of Congress.

They never say that. They say: Let's privatize Social Security. Let's privatize the Veterans' Administration in Richmond or Cleveland or Cincinnati. Let's privatize Medicare.

They never talk about privatizing their benefits.

But think about the generations of Americans who have benefited from Social Security and the generations to come relying on the promise of Social Security and Medicare.

For the last part of my remarks, Mr. President, I introduced a resolution affirming the Senate's commitment, last year, to protecting and expanding Social Security.

Dozens of my colleagues got on this bill, including, I believe, the Presiding Officer—a resolution affirming the Senate's commitment to protecting and expanding Social Security. But you know what? Not one Republican signed onto this resolution; not one re-committed to the promise of the American people that if you work hard all of your life, Social Security will be there for you.

What is more American, what is more basic, what is more family-oriented than: I pay into Social Security my whole life, I pay into Medicare, and if I get prematurely sick or disabled or when I retire, why would we not honor that commitment? Why do some Mem-

bers of Congress want to privatize this program? Because we know what happens when they are privatized. The investors come in, the banks come in and end up undermining it, and there is less dollars—fewer dollars available and less public support.

Americans shouldn't have to worry that politicians secure with government pensions are going to try to take away their retirement benefits that they earn. I will again introduce that resolution—probably next month—affirming the Senate's commitment to protecting and expanding Social Security, opposed to privatization.

I will again ask all my colleagues to sign on. I assume we will get many. I am hopeful this time—hopeful—that some Republicans join us. Republican seniors in Ohio would support it. It is just, their elected officials so often don't.

People shouldn't have to worry if politicians who put our entire economy at risk by using this debt limit fight—this “are we going to pay our bills or not” fight—to cut social security, but here we are.

I urge my colleagues to do the patriotic duty to raise the debt limit, without condition, without threatening economic calamity. And I ask that you work with us to do what the American people overwhelmingly want: protect and expand Social Security and Medicare and VA benefits.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Georgia.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME—S.J. RES. 4 and H.R. 22

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, I understand that there are two measures at the desk, and I ask for their first reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the measures by title for the first time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 4) removing the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

A bill (H.R. 22) to prohibit the Secretary of Energy from sending petroleum products from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to China, and for other purposes.

Mr. WARNOCK. I now ask for a second reading, and I object to my own request en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard. The measures will be read for the second time on the next legislative day.

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276d-276g, as amended, appoints the following Senator as Chairman of the Senate Delegation to the Canada-U.S. Interparliamentary Group conference during the 118th Congress: the Honorable AMY KLOBUCHAR of Minnesota.